

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,  
Halpin Block  
53-55 Locust Street  
Dubuque  
Dubuque County  
Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-AZ

HABS  
IOWA,  
31-DUBU,  
13-AZ

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**PHOTOGRAPHS  
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

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Historic American Buildings Survey  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver Colorado 80225

## Halpin Block

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Site Location: 53-55 Locust Street  
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa  
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 4.22  
Cadastral grid : SE1/4 NE1/4 S25 T89N R2E  
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'  
UTM coordinates: 15.691860.4706980  
Lot dimensions : 97'x 150': .33 acre  
Lot description: East 97' of City Lot 571.  
Present Owner: Mary Eleanor Kalinoski  
Present Usage: 1st floor: Happy Hour Tavern, vacant;  
2nd floor: apartment housing.  
Present Condition : good

Overall Dimensions: 2-story main block: 43'x 62; rear frame porch: 43'x 7'.  
Orientation : east  
Architectural Plan type: symmetrical duplex in 2-story rectangle.  
Description : Foundation: coursed limestone ashlar perimeter walls.  
Structure : wood frame with brick masonry bearing and fire walls.  
Ext. walls: common red brick laid in common bond; cast iron and glass storefront on first floor front.  
Roofs : flat composition roof with corbeled brick parapets and ceramic tile copings over 2-story brick sections; shallow shed on rear porch.  
Chimneys : three simple brick exterior chimneys integral with each sidewall.  
Dormers : none  
Windows : painted wood 2/2 double-hung windows with aluminum storms throughout 2nd floor, those on front with stone Italianate lintels and continuous sill formed by top of cast iron 1st floor facade, those on side with brick segmental arch heads and stone lug sills; fixed sash storefront windows infilled in cast iron facade, each with brick bulkhead and transom (now covered with plywood).  
Doors : three single-leaf doors with transoms placed in storefront, two of which provide access to 1st floor shops, the third to upstairs apartments; simple single-leaf side door (with transom) at rear of north side.  
Porches : 2-story, wood frame, open rear porch.

Details : cast iron front storefront with shamrock-and-horseshoe emblems cast into columns; arched datestone on 2nd floor front, also with shamrock-and-horseshoe emblem with inscribed "Good Luck," and P.H. Halpin, 1882; over-scaled metal cornice on front parapet with paired brackets, modillions and large central Italianate arch.

Construction Date : 1882

Architecture Style: Italianate

Physical History : Patrick H. Halpin built this two-story brick block in 1882 for \$6,000. The first floor was divided into two equal spaces by a masonry firewall. One side housed Halpin's grocery; the other, his saloon. He operated both businesses here until sometime before 1908. By that time the grocery business was owned by Thomas Meehan. It changed hands a number of times before being acquired by Thompson and Hogan around 1920. Thompson and Hogan continued here until after World War II; since that time the building has housed businesses such as: the Glass Tap Tavern, the South End Beer Store, Dunne's Conoco Service Station, the Midwest Wheel and Rim Company, and, most recently, the Happy Hour Tavern. The second floor of the building has always been divided into rental apartments. The building remains essentially unchanged from its original appearance. The only exterior alteration of note is the construction of the simple frame rear porch in 1948.

Significance: Patrick Halpin's parents, Michael and Mary [Hehir] Halpin, immigrated to the United States from Ireland in 1849. He was born en route on Christmas Day. The second of ten children, he lived with his family for six years in Brooklyn before moving to Dubuque in 1856. Patrick began working as a grocery clerk at age 15, first for P.T. Bronat and later John Dunn until he could raise enough capital to open his own grocery shop in 1868 at the tender age of 18. Eleven years later Halpin married Dubuquan Mary A. Robison; that year they built a two-story brick house on Jones Street and eventually had nine children. Halpin was a director in the Dubuque County Bank, and was a director and stockholder of the Excelsior Brass Works. But throughout his career, his primary occupation was as owner of the grocery store and saloon. In 1882 he moved into this substantial two-story brick block at a prominent corner of the predominantly Irish neighborhood of Little Dublin. In 1888 Halpin advertised: P.H. Halpin, the reliable grocer. Goods delivered to all parts of the city. Firemen will be welcome. Don't fail to call. Corner Jones & Locust Streets. "His business is located at the corner of Jones and Locust Streets, where he carries a full stock of staple and fancy groceries," an 1894 gazette stated. "He is now well established in business, and from the public receives a liberal patronage which is well deserved. He earnestly desires to please his customers and in all dealings is straightforward and honorable, and in consequence he has gained the confidence and good will of the community."

As his business grew, so did Halpin's influence in Little Dublin. A stalwart Democrat, he became an important First Ward politician. In 1890 he was first elected Clerk of the District Court, an office he held for several terms. Additionally, Halpin was a member of the Catholic Church and sat on the executive committee of the Personal Liberty Association of Dubuque.

The Halpin Block is historically significant for its close association with this locally prominent civic, commercial and political figure. With its brick walls, metal cornice and cast iron storefront, the building is architecturally distinguished as a well-proportioned and well-preserved example of Victorian commercial design: the prototypical corner bar and grocery store and a visible landmark in the Irish community of Little Dublin.

References:           Dubuque City Directories: 1857 - 1970.  
                          *Portrait and Biographical Record of Dubuque, Jones and Clayton Counties, Iowa* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company), pages 373-74.  
                          *The Industries of Dubuque: Her Relations as a Trade Center, Business Houses and Manufacturing Establishments* (Dubuque: J.M. Elstner, 1887), page 104.  
                          Iowa State Gazeteer and Business Directory: 1882-1918.  
                          Sanborn Insurance Maps: 1879, 1884, 1891, 1909, 1972.  
                          Dubuque County Assessment Record.  
                          Dubuque City Building Permit Record: 53-55 Locust Street.  
                          Iowa Department of Transportation, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Cultural Resources Assessment."  
                          *Dubuque Daily Herald*: 31 December 1882.

Compiler:           Clayton B. Fraser, Fraserdesign, Loveland Colorado  
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